



## **Consultative Meeting**

# **Planning for the Global Patient Safety Challenge - Medication Safety**

**19-20 April 2016, WHO Headquarters  
Geneva, Switzerland**

## **Meeting Report**



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## Acknowledgements

This report summarizes the proceedings, presentations and discussions related to, or those that took place during the WHO Global Patient Safety Challenge consultative meeting. The expert consultation was jointly hosted by the WHO Department of Service Delivery and Safety (SDS) and the Essential Medicines and Health Products (EMP), under the guidance of the WHO Envoy for Patient Safety Sir Liam Donaldson (Chair) and unit coordinator Dr Neelam Dhingra-Kumar.

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## **Executive summary**

Medication errors are a leading cause of injury in both developed and developing countries and can occur at different stages of the medication use process. Multiple interventions addressing the reduction of medication errors have already been developed. For these to be effective, a wide mobilization of stakeholders supporting sustained actions is required in the context of modern medicine. In response to Member States' concerns, the World Health Organization (WHO) has identified Medication Safety as the theme for the next Global Patient Safety Challenge.

A consultative meeting, held 19-20 April 2016 and hosted at WHO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, brought together 57 experts and leaders in patient safety and medication safety from 23 countries, and the nongovernmental (NGO) sector, as well as the pharmaceutical industry. Participants reviewed, discussed and agreed on the Challenge scope and framework. A Steering Group and five working groups will be established to support the development and implementation of the Challenge, under the strategic leadership of the WHO Envoy for Patient Safety, Sir Liam Donaldson.

The process of review and consensus building of the strategic framework and plan for launching and implementing the WHO Global Patient Safety Challenge - Medication Safety provided specific recommendations for framework finalization, and for the formal establishment of the Steering Group and the Working Groups.

The global target of a 50% reduction in medication-related harm was provisionally agreed during this consultation, with a proposed option for nationally adaptable targets, in particular for low- and middle-income countries. Difficulties of measurement and lack of baseline data for reaching the target were equally acknowledged. Further agreement on specific methods for progress quantification will be agreed following three expert reports on polypharmacy, high-risk medications/dangerous drugs and transitions of care that will also define the flagship elements of the Challenge. Encouraging and increasing reporting of medication-related patient safety incidents will also be part of this Challenge's scope.

The WHO Global Patient Safety Challenge - Medication Safety is led and coordinated by the Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Unit in the Service Delivery and Safety Department (SDS), in collaboration with the Essential Medicines and Health Products (EMP) Department. The Global Patient Safety Challenge on Medication Safety is planned to be launched in the first quarter of 2017.

## Introduction

The exploding array of medication use in modern medicine comes with the heavy cost of unsafe medication practices and medication errors, in addition to medication-related interactions (drug-drug, drug-disease and drug-food) and adverse events. A global issue, medication safety affects close to 78% of patients who have a history of medication use, and sometimes leads to significant harm or death. The cost of medication errors is estimated at 42 billion USD annually worldwide<sup>1</sup>. The multiple causality of medication errors, the costs in quality of life days and additional health expenditure have drawn the attention of governments. Actions at various levels, including policy intervention, training and medication management have been developed to address this problem, but their use is often random and limited. The occurrence of medication errors requires a system approach that would create the premise that would prevent the error from occurring in the first place and improve medication safety.

The Global Patient Safety Challenge - Medication Safety will propose solutions to address many of the obstacles the world faces today to ensure the safety of medication practices. The Challenge is being taken forward under the strategic leadership of the WHO Envoy for Patient Safety, Sir Liam Donaldson. It is led and coordinated by the Patient Safety and Quality Improvement unit of the Service Delivery and Safety Department, in collaboration with the Essential Medicines and Health Products department.

The Service Delivery and Safety department has had previous experience in coordinating two Global Patient Safety Challenges. The first, Clean Care is Safer Care, addressed hand washing as a means to prevent the spread of infection. The second, Safe Surgery Saves Lives, focused on improving the safety of surgical care. Key lessons learned can be extracted from this experience, such as the importance of simplicity, wide-applicability and measurability as guiding principles of Global Patient Safety Challenges. Patient Safety and Quality Improvement unit has developed a number of tools, checklists and guides in the area of patient safety, which have brought significant benefits to patients worldwide. The EMP department already has an existing body of work on access, policy, pharmacovigilance, regulation and use of medicines. Their existing efforts and established networks in the area of medicines will serve to enrich the development and implementation of the Challenge.

The consultative meeting convened is one of the main components in the planning phase of the Challenge and provided the foundation for the framework development and implementation phases, as well as resource mobilization required. It was attended by 57 international experts in patient safety and medication safety from 23 countries, as well as representatives from the nongovernmental sector, as well as the pharmaceutical industry (see Annex 3, List of participants).

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<sup>1</sup> IMS Institute for Healthcare Informatics. Advancing the responsible use of medicines: applying levers for change. 2012. [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2222541](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2222541).

## Opening session

The event was opened by Sir Liam Donaldson, WHO Envoy for Patient Safety, who welcomed the participants and acknowledged that unsafe medication practices were one of the main causes of health care-related harm. After a brief history on the establishment of the World Alliance for Patient Safety and the WHO Patient Safety Programme in 2005, Sir Liam Donaldson explained the concept of the Challenge, as a patient safety priority area of activity, affecting all countries at different degrees and with a single flagship element, while promoting all successful interventions.

Two global patient safety challenges have already been launched and successfully conducted over the past decade. The first Global Patient Safety Challenge 'Clean care is safer care' had hand hygiene as its flagship element, promoted a system approach, and has taken forward the issue of combating health care-associated infections. The second Global Patient Safety Challenge, 'Safe surgery saves lives', had the WHO Surgical Safety Checklist as its flagship element, and contributed to reducing the rates of harm during surgery.

The third Global Patient Safety Challenge is focused on medication safety is expected to draw on the experience accumulated during the previous challenges and to promote a facilitative and developmental process of change to reduce patient harm generated by unsafe medication practices.

The objectives of the consultative meeting, introduced by Dr Neelam Dhingra-Kumar, underlined the important role of harnessing political commitment, sustaining momentum and enhancing dialogue between partners, in order to develop the content of the Challenge. The specific objectives of the event included a review of the scope of the problem of medication safety and medication errors in particular; already undertaken work and initiatives developed by WHO and other partners on this topic and how remaining gaps could be addressed within the Challenge's scope; identification of key partners and stakeholders in the development and implementation of the Challenge; review of methods of work and the draft action plan for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Challenge impact and outcomes.

## Session 1: Scope of the problem of medication safety and proposal of the

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